

SAND CANYON Pueblo and Trail

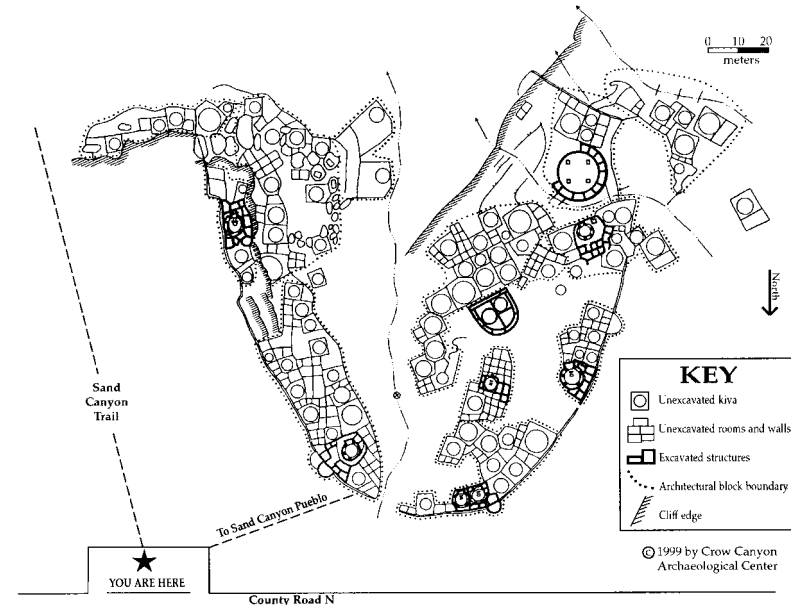
Welcome to the Sand Canyon Pueblo and Sand Canyon Trail

The Sand Canyon Trail is straight ahead, and leads toward McElmo Canyon, 6.5 miles (10 km) away. Sand Canyon Pueblo is to your right, 100 yards (31 m) west of here. Several hundred people lived at Sand Canyon Pueblo between A.D. 1245 and 1290. Some sections were excavated by archaeologists from 1983 to 1993, then reburied to preserve the site.

Today the pueblo looks like a rubble mound with few visible walls. But it remains very much alive for modern Pueblo people, whose ancestors lived in this region for centuries.

We have a Hopi word for this area, kiiseo, it refers to ancestral place in the northeast. Hopi people do return to some of these places; in that way the connection is maintained.... Many different Pueblo people are linked to these places.

— Harlan Mahle , Hopi



Modern Pueblo people always focus on mountains and water, our ancestors did too.... There were people here who called this place home.

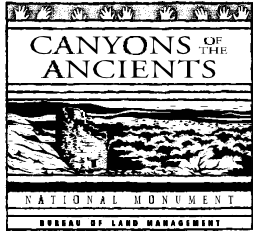
— Vernon Lujan , Taos Pueblo

Visitors here should be aware of the relationship of this community to nature.... When you look out from this place you see the mountains, the sky, the snow. The designs of petroglyphs, pottery, and buildings are symbolic of these things.

— Petuuche Gilbert, Acoma Pueblo

Thanks to Pete Peterson for the pueblo drawings and Crow Canyon Archaeological Center for conducting the Pueblo interviews.





When you are at these places you should leave a prayer to the ancient ones and the spirits. Springs are very, very sacred. Don't disturb them.

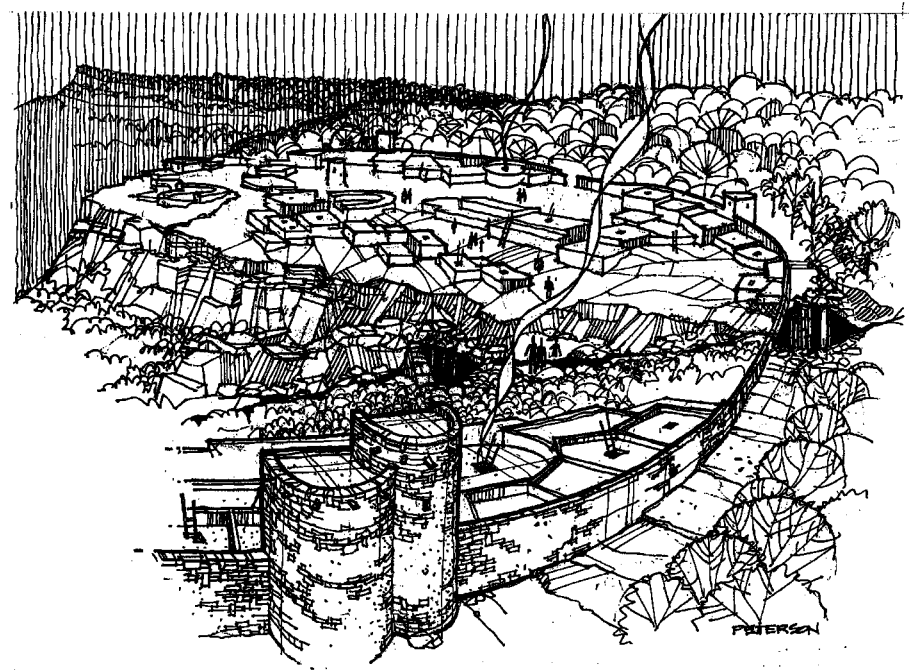
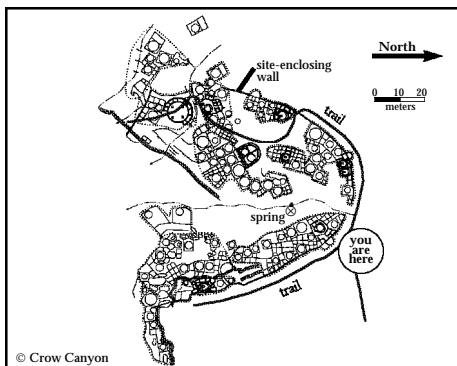
— Harlan Mahle, Hopi

You are standing at the northeast edge of the pueblo. Please stay on the trail, which branches to the right and left.

A low wall enclosed the village on three sides. The wall probably dammed seasonal rain and snow melt in the shallow drainage to your right, which may have helped recharge the spring inside the village.

The village was built in a U-shape surrounding a small spring. This spring was the spiritual heart of the village, and was one reason the people chose this location. According to Pueblo tradition, the human

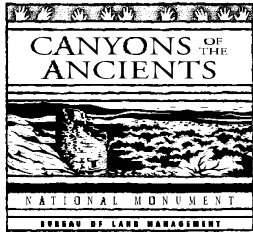
race entered our world through a spring or lake.



Our people emerged from the lake, and it is of great symbolic importance.... Each community has a physical center but there is a symbolic center, too; [The] centers of Sand Canyon Pueblo would have been in each kiva's nansipu, in the centers of the plazas, and definitely at the spring.

— Tito Naranjo, Santa Clara Pueblo





Sand Canyon Pueblo was a close-knit community. To build this place took collective decision making and strong leadership. Look at how the buildings are organized. There was a concern for the whole community, not just for the individual.

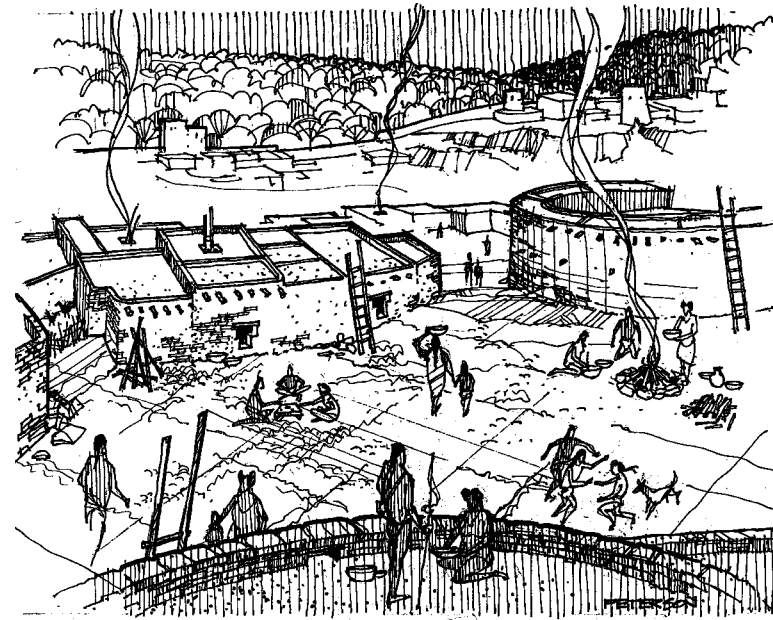
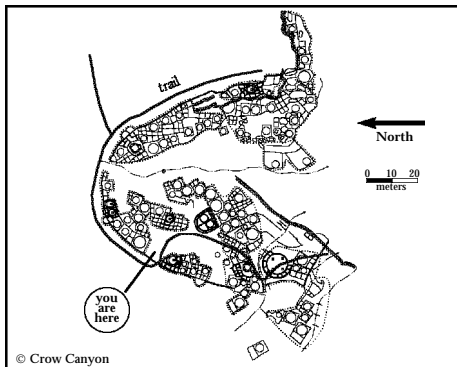
— Petuuche Gilbert, Acoma Pueblo

A few feet back, you stepped over the remains of a wall that surrounds the pueblo on three sides. The enclosing wall helped define the village by separating inside from outside space.

You are now on the west side of the pueblo in a plaza, an open area within the village. Plazas provide a focus for community activity. In Pueblo culture, community is a very strong concept— more like a family than a piece of real estate.

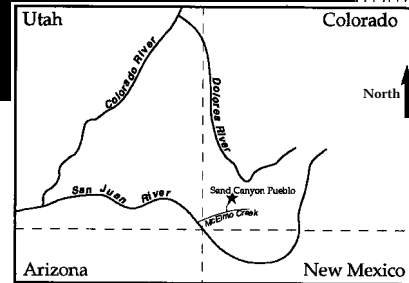
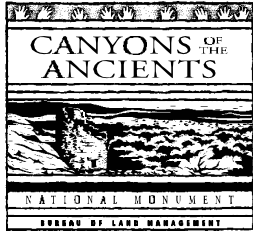
This side of Sand Canyon Pueblo contains most of its kivas and open areas. Perhaps most public activities took place here. The east side of the village, with fewer kivas and public spaces, may have served a different purpose. The architectural contrast may reflect a social division within the community. Many

modern Pueblo tribes divide themselves into two segments or moieties, each with distinct responsibilities for the benefit of the whole group.



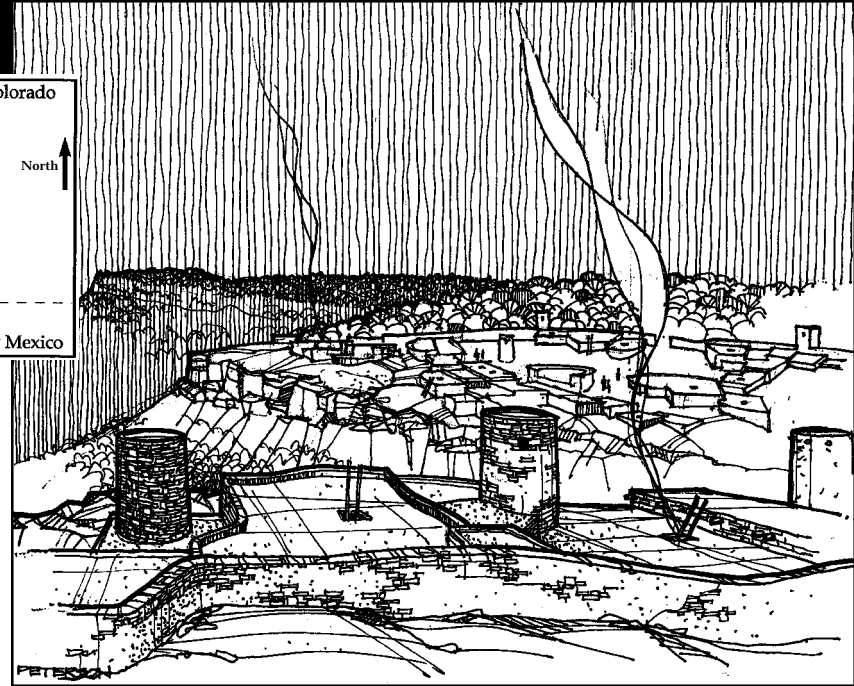
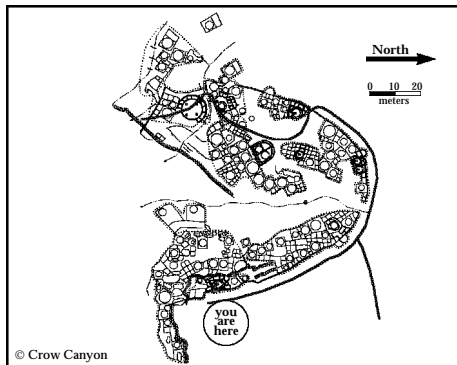
Living in a pueblo you get the feel of your neighbors, not only your family, but your neighbors— the whole community. You feel the love and understanding, the compassion that is needed in living in a group like that.

— Esther Martinez, San Juan Pueblo



Excavations showed that this room block was originally L-shaped and more rooms were added later. Tree-ring samples from the central kiva indicate it was built in A.D. 1262. However, many kiva roof beams were missing from the debris and were probably reused in other buildings. Throughout the village there is evidence that some rooms were dismantled while others were still being built.

From here you can see the whole village site and the upper reaches of Sand Canyon. Sand Canyon descends into McElmo Canyon, which drains into the San Juan River. Many Ancestral Pueblo villagers lived along tributaries of the San Juan during the 1200s. Fewer people lived in the upper Colorado and Dolores River drainage areas.



A tower, up to 15 feet tall originally, spanned a wide gap in the bedrock on the cliff edge, perhaps allowing entry from below. Sand Canyon Pueblo had at least 14 towers. Towers were not always built on the highest points, so they were probably not lookouts.

Examination of large public buildings of this village, and a study of smaller settlements in the canyon below, suggest that Sand Canyon Pueblo was a community center for a much larger area. But the extent of cooperation or competition among local communities is uncertain, and remains an important research question for archaeologists.